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Abraham Lincoln and Music

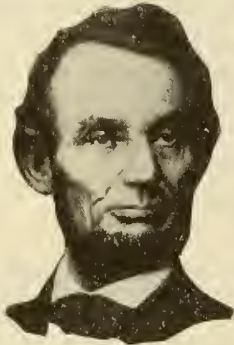
Harmonica

Excerpts from newspapers and other
sources

From the files of the
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THE AMERICAN BOY

Feb 1929



**Abraham Lincoln
and the Harmonica**

On one of his journeys for a debate with Douglas, Abraham Lincoln picked out of his pocket a little harmonica and played upon it, seeming to get happiness in the playing thereon. Says Carl Sandburg in "Lincoln, The Prairie Years": "Someone remarked about his playing on the harmonica and he said: 'This is my band; Douglas had a brass band with him in Peoria, but this will do for me.'"

Back in the days when Abraham Lincoln was engaged in his world-famous debates with Stephen A. Douglas, the Hohner factories were engaged in making "The World's Best" Harmonicas. Today, Hohner Harmonicas are available at leading dealers the world over. Ask for the Free Instruction Book. M. Hohner, Inc., Dept. 151, 114 East 16th St., New York City.



SOUSA LAUDS MERITS OF HARMONICA BANDS

Organizations, Like Those Sponsored by Press in Pittsburgh, Lay Foundation for Musical Career, Says Noted Composer.

Abraham Lincoln played but one musical instrument, the harmonica. He called it his "band", according to Carl Sandburg, in his account of Lincoln's prairie days.

In this connection, the statement recently made by Lieut. Com. John Philip Sousa about harmonica bands, is also interesting.

"I am a great advocate of the harmonica," said Sousa, "and especially indorse the harmonica bands which are winning sweeping popularity. Mastery of the harmonica lays the foundation for a musical career. Training of the musical ear is one of the important things in any musician's life. The harmonica gives the ear training in its simpler

form and develops into harmony later. I think harmonica contests are a fine thing and I wish them all the success in the world."

Ten large bands averaging more than 20 players and having a total membership of 268 young musicians have already been organized since the playground teaching campaign was begun three weeks ago under the joint sponsorship of The Pittsburgh Press and the Bureau of Recreation and a number of smaller bands are rapidly increasing their membership. With several playgrounds yet to be organized, it is likely that within the next two weeks the number of players on this fascinating little instrument will be doubled.

The largest bands are located at the following playgrounds: Brookline, Arsenal, Garfield, Frazier, Leslie West Penn, Mary J. Cowley (Troy Hill), Ream, Ormsby and Arlington.

Any boy or girl who wishes to take advantage of the opportunity to learn to play the harmonica is invited to join the nearest playground group and receive free instruction. Under the system used by E. I. Clark, The Press harmonica instructor, the children learn to play very quickly, mastering two tunes, usually, in the first lesson. After that it is only a question of personal application and practice outside of the classes.

Judging from the number of harmonicas that have been issued by the circulation department of The Press, a large number of children who have been given harmonicas as premiums for getting subscriptions have not yet enrolled in the playground bands for instruction. A cordial invitation to all such children is extended to come and join one of the bands. Some children can learn to play by using the book of instruction, "How to Play the Harmonica" given by The Press with each harmonica, but most beginners learn more quickly by playing in a class

PITTSBURG PA. PRESS
AUGUST 5, 1929

Abraham Lincoln's Harmonica-Band

It is said that, in those stirring days when Lincoln and Stephen A. Douglas were engaged in their historic debates, Lincoln always carried a harmonica in his pocket, on which he played for relaxation.

"This is my band," he would quizzically remark, as he drew his little instrument forth for inspection. "You see, Mr. Douglas had to have a brass band to meet him at Peoria; but this is enough for me."

MARCH, 1937

Honest Abe Lincoln, the Emancipator, Played the Harmonica While Spellbinding the Country

CHICAGO, Oct. 18.

“ON one of his journeys to the next town for a debate with Douglas, Abraham Lincoln picked out of his pocket a little harmonica and played upon it, seeming to get happiness in the playing thereon. Some one remarked about his playing on the harmonica and he said: ‘This is my band; Douglas had a brass band with him in Peoria, but this will do for me.’”

This quotation is from the second volume of Sandburg’s “Lincoln and the Prairies.” It is cited to show Lincoln’s appreciation of music in a letter sent by C. H. English, director of the Bureau of Recreation of the Board of Education, Chicago, to Charles B. Hohmann, general representative for M. Hohner, Inc. The harmonica Lincoln used was “undoubtedly a Hohner,” Mr.

Hohmann says, as his company has been manufacturing these instruments for the last sixty-eight years.

“Abraham Lincoln was passionately fond of music,” says Mr. English in his letter. “He would very often cancel important engagements in order to attend a concert. As far as it is known, he did not have the advantage of a technical training in music, so that, for the most part, he had to enjoy it as a listener.

“Recently, in the second volume of Sandburg’s ‘Lincoln of the Prairies’ I found a statement that is very interesting. It tells of Lincoln’s playing a harmonica while on his way to a debate with Douglas. It seems that our great President found in the little harmonica his only method of expression musically. And as one has in mind the picture of his loneliness, I have no doubt that he would pick up the harmonica and play as a means of self amusement and to forget, perhaps, the tragedy that was his.”

